
Railroad Workers — Fight On! [April 1920]

Leaflet published by the Communist Labor Party, New York.
Copy in Comintern Archive, RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 6, l. 35.

YOU ARE OUT ON STRIKE.¹

For a long time you were promised redress of your grievances, and you waited — you waited until this great truth dawned upon you: THAT THE ONLY POWER TO FORCE REDRESS OF YOUR GRIEVANCES IS YOUR OWN STRENGTH AND NOT THE “GOOD WILL” OF MR. WILSON, MR. HINES,² OR MR. RAILROAD PRESIDENT.

You relied upon promises while the coal miners were striking, though uniting with them you could have both won.

You relied upon promises while the steel workers were striking, though uniting with them you could have both won.

Now that conditions become unbearable to you, you have gone out on strike. And now you find all those who promised you redress lined up against you. Lined up with your railroad president you find “your” government and the officers of your union.

The collective bargain, the “sacred” contract, you find to be a bill of sale between the exploiting railroad magnate and the slave contractor in the disguise of union officials, agreeing to deliver you, body

¹ On April 2, 1920, a leader of the Chicago Yardmen's Association was demoted and a spontaneous strike of 700 switchmen erupted. By April 9 the wildcat strike spread across the country from New York to San Francisco, with other brotherhoods joining the striking switchmen. Union officials making use of the threat of expulsion joined with the government in forcing an end to the labor revolt, with 23 strike leaders arrested in Chicago on April 15, effectively bringing the incident to a close. See: Jeremy Brecher, *Strike!* San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1972; pp. 128-130.

² **Walker D. Hines** (1870-1934) was the second Director General of the United States Railroad Administration, the wartime central authority controlling American railways. Hines was formerly the general counsel of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway. Wartime nationalization ended on March 1, 1920.

and soul, for a certain time at a certain price. The railroad magnate retains full control over his economic strength, his industry, and he uses his control to increase in all ways he can, his profits. BUT THE WORKERS, THROUGH THE "SACRED" CONTRACT, GIVE UP CONTROL OF THEIR STRENGTH, THEIR POWER; GIVE UP THEIR RIGHT TO STRIKE AND BECOME HELPLESS SLAVES. And if the slaves revolt the exploiting capitalists, and the union officials in the guise of slave contractors, combine in their denunciation of such "unlawful" strikes.

In this hellish work to repress the working class, the capitalists, of course, make full use of the governmental machine, namely, Congress, the military force, the police, the spies.

As the strike proceeds, you railroad men become convinced that you are faced by the united front of all the parasites living upon your toil, sweat, and blood.

LOOK WHAT IS GOING ON ABOUT YOU! Listen to the curses that are being heaped upon your heads by the prostituted capitalist press, because you dared to take your fate into your own hands. Listen to the gnashing of teeth on the part of the railroad magnates and the "leaders" of your brotherhoods, because you, by mass action, tied up the former's profits and cast aside the latter.

Look how the government seeks to find and hound those who self-sacrificingly devote their energies to your cause.

All the powers of darkness have joined hands to combat you because they realize full well that your present revolt threatens them with disaster. These vultures understand that such a strike as yours, a strike that paralyzes the railroads, the main artery of production, a strike against the will of the union "leaders" who are considered lawful because they are the servants of your capitalist masters — such a strike deals a powerful blow to their domination.

FIGHT ON THEN — YOU RAILROAD WORKERS! KEEP UP THE BATTLE! AVOID COMPROMISE!

Remember that the meaning and purpose of your struggle is not merely a slight betterment of your slave conditions. These slight betterments were occasionally secured for you by your union "leaders." Have these crumbs helped you any?

DO NOT CONTENT YOURSELF WITH CRUMBS from the sumptuous table of your masters. FIGHT ON FOR MORE THAN CRUMBS. Fight on for the seizure of all the means of production, all the factories and mills, all the mines and railroads. All of these belong

to you. All of these are the product of your labor. But all of them were grabbed by your exploiters, the capitalists, who maintain their grip upon you with the aid of the government.

TO OWN THE INDUSTRIES YOU MUST UNITE YOUR FORCES WITH THOSE OF OTHER WORKERS IN ONE BIG UNION. Abandon your old rotting, conservative unions with their treacherous leaders who sell you out to your enemies.

Create a new organization, a real working class revolutionary organization, with which you can lay hold of the governmental powers, which at present are being used by the capitalist class to enslave you and bleed you to death.

ALL POWER AND ALL INDUSTRIES TO THE WORKERS!

(COMMUNIST LABOR PARTY)

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport

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